



Department of Justice

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ECUADORIAN NATIONAL CHARGED WITH ATTEMPTING TO KILL A DEA AGENT EXTRADITED TO THE U.S. FROM COLOMBIA

WASHINGTON – An Ecuadorian national charged with the attempted murder of a DEA agent has been extradited from Colombia to the United States, the Department of Justice announced today.

Jairo Motta-Vargas arrived in Miami from Colombia on April 4, and was transported to Washington, D.C. yesterday. He is scheduled to appear before a magistrate judge at U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. today at 1:45 p.m.

Jairo Motta-Vargas has been named in a two-count indictment previously returned in the District of Columbia on June 20, 2000. Motta-Vargas was charged with the attempted murder of a DEA agent, and with unlawfully impeding, with the use of a deadly weapon, a DEA agent in the performance of his duties.

“The arrival of Jairo Motta-Vargas in the United States demonstrates our resolve to bring to justice those who attempt to kill or hurt American citizens, particularly our front-line law enforcement agents,” said Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales. “I again thank the Colombian government for their assistance in extraditing Motta-Vargas and for their continuing partnership in the war against drugs.”

“DEA’s courageous men and women put their lives on the line every day for the safety of our nation. We take attempts or threats on their lives seriously, and we relentlessly pursue their attackers as long as it takes to see justice done,” said DEA Administrator Karen P. Tandy. “Our agents are especially vulnerable and brave because they willingly put themselves in the drug underworld, where profits and power are more valued than human life. We are grateful that our agent walked away from this attack unharmed, and that his attacker, Jairo Motta-Vargas, will now answer to an American judge and jury.”

Motta-Vargas was allegedly a member of a Quito, Ecuador-based international drug trafficking organization. In 1999, law enforcement authorities in London, England seized 20 kilograms of heroin belonging to Motta-Vargas’ drug trafficking organization, according to the indictment. On July 12, 1999, in Quito, Motta-Vargas, believing that a DEA Special Agent was responsible for the seizure, fired at least three shots from a Beretta 9mm semi-automatic pistol at point-blank range at the DEA agent while the agent was seated in a motor vehicle. Motta-

Vargas was arrested several days later by Ecuadorian police and was ultimately sentenced to six years in prison.

After his release from prison, Motta-Vargas was returned to Colombia, where the United States filed a provisional arrest request and a request for extradition. On March 23, 2007, the government of Colombia granted the extradition request on the charge of attempted murder of a DEA agent, but denied extradition on the charge of impeding a DEA agent in the performance of his duties. Motta-Vargas will only be tried on the attempted murder charge, and if convicted, faces a sentence of up to 20 years in prison.

An indictment contains only allegations. All defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law.

The investigation in this case was led by the Drug Enforcement Administration, and is being prosecuted in the District of Columbia by Robert Feitel and Carmen Colon of the Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section (NDDS) of the Criminal Division at the Department of Justice. The extradition was handled by the Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs and NDDS.

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